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# PRINCESS ILSE

*TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN*

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

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CHICAGO:

ALBERT, SCOTT & COMPANY

1891.

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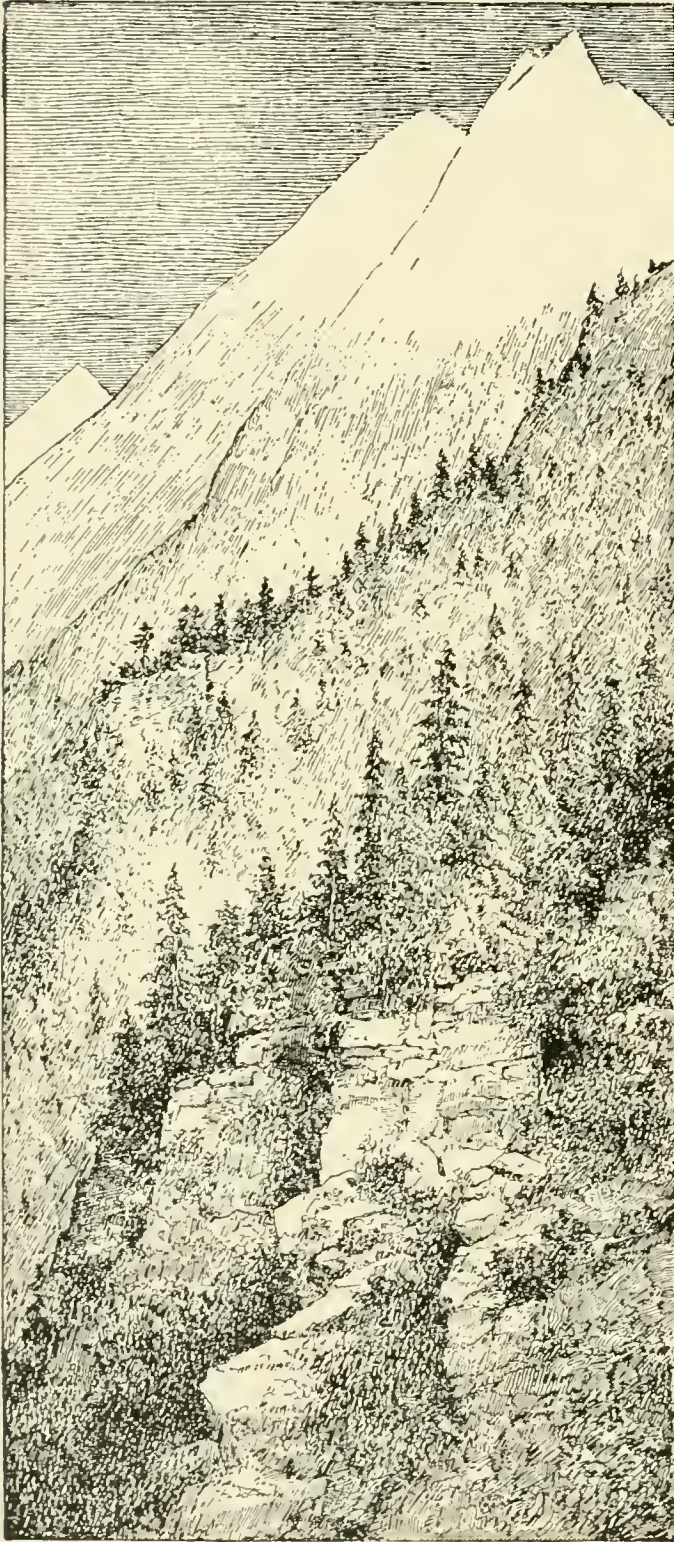
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LONG centuries ago, “when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the flood was upon the earth,” all the waters flowed together, overwhelming the mountains and lashing their wild waves over the loftiest summits in appalling confusion.

Then the Lord had compassion upon the poor earth, and allowed the clear light of heaven to penetrate the grey vault of clouds, and commanded the waters to seek their homes in the valleys. But neither brook nor stream could have regained its former bed had not troops of good angels carefully conducted each into its right path.

Therefore, when the long lines of the highest mountain ranges rose out of the flood, angels alighted upon the peaks, and, descending slowly on all sides into the valleys, drove the waters before them. Coming further down they arranged



HIGHEST PINNACLES OF THE ALPS.

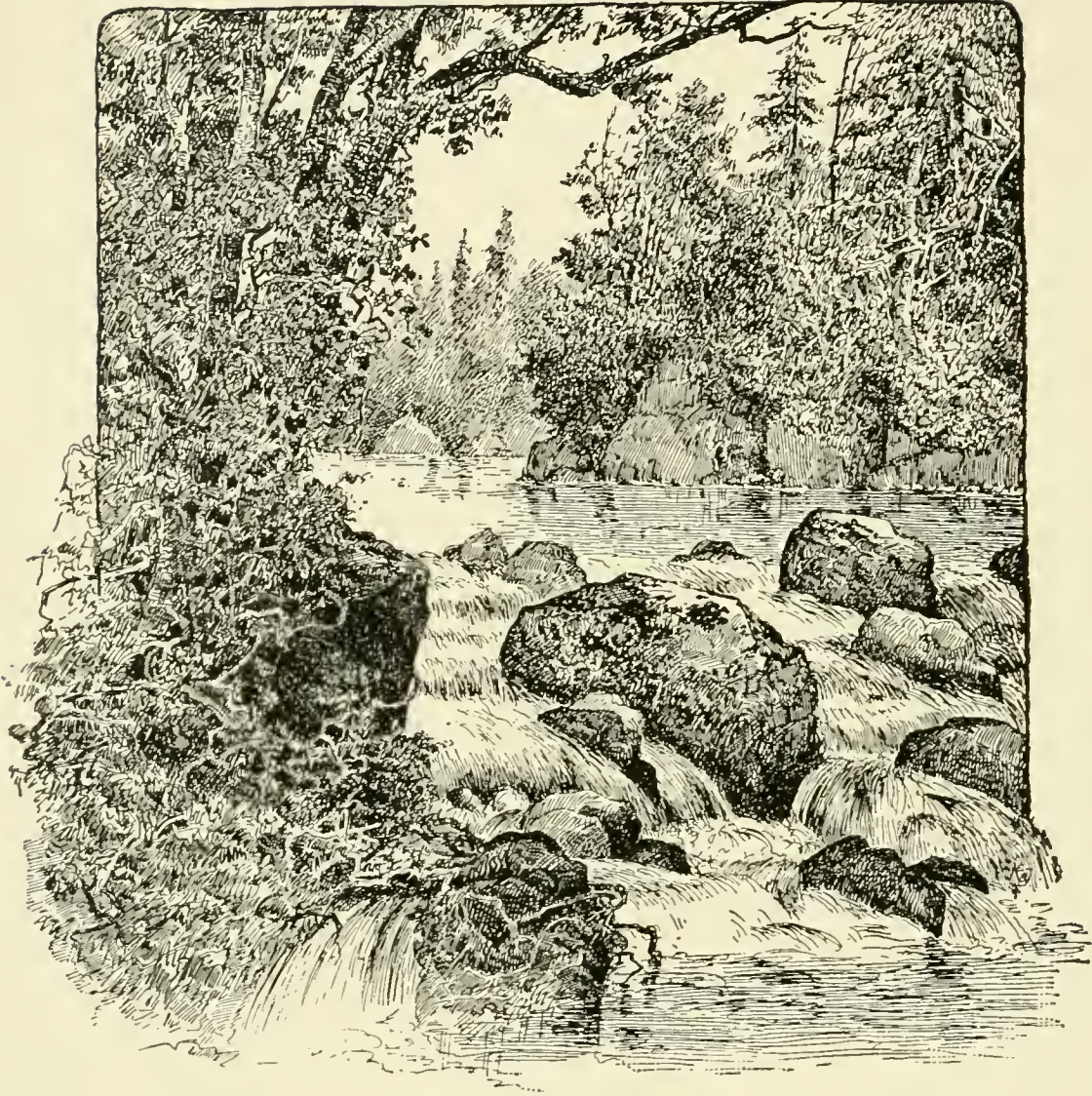
the courses of the streams and rivulets, marking off the boundaries of the sea, and hemming in the lakes with jagged chains of rocks or green girdles of fields and woods.

With broad wind brooms and brushes of sunbeams these angels busied themselves upon the wet earth, brushing the mud out of the grass, drying the heavy foliage of the trees, and working so assiduously that great clouds of water-dust hung in the mountain clefts like misty veils of fog. In this manner the labor had con-

tinued many days, and had been nearly completed, when a tired angel sat resting upon one of the highest pinnacles of the Alps. To the North and the South, to the East and the West he looked thoughtfully down upon the green earth, which had risen so gracious and youthful out of the baptism of the atonement.

“How beautiful she is,” thought he. “How radiant in her purity. Will she ever remain thus or will the filth and misery engendered by sin again lay their black fingers upon her blooming face?”

A sorrowful and apprehensive sigh stirred the breast of the good angel. He turned his dazzled eyes away from the morning sun, blood-red on the horizon, and gazed long in the direction that the German streams had taken. He saw them in the distance, the main stream far in advance, drawing after it the smaller ones, while numberless rivulets and brooks, like satellites, joyously brought up the rear. He rejoiced that they were so well conducted and without entanglement, and that no little spring was so insignificant but that an angel had gone with it to indicate the right path, when it loiteringly and irresolutely turned to one side or the other; and to carefully protect it when it thoughtlessly rushed over the rocky cliffs.



He saw the merry vine-crowned Rhine hastening restlessly along, and fancied he could hear from afar the exultation with which he greeted his beloved Moselle as she blushingly advanced to meet him, with locks also entwined with vines.

Farther and farther withdrew the waters, their

roaring and babbling resounding faintly in the distance.

Suddenly, however, the watching angel was arrested by another sound, a low afflicted weeping and splashing near at hand. He rose, and stepping behind the cliff whence the tones proceeded, there found a young brook enveloped in a white veil, and lying on the ground, weeping bitterly. As he sympathetically bent over it, raising its veil, he recognized the little Ilse, for whom a bed was prepared in a valley of the Hartz mountains.

“Poor Child, said the good angel, “Have you been obliged to remain up here alone? Have all the others gone on, none of them thinking to take you with them?” “Forgotten have I not been,” pertly replied the willful little Ilse, with a toss of her head, “Old Weser waited a long while, and beckoned and called me, and Ecker and Ocker wanted to seize me, but I would not go. Far rather would I pine away here. Shall I descend into the valley to run through the meadows like a common brook, and do mean service in watering the cattle and sheep and washing their clumsy feet? I, the Princess Ilse? Only look at me, am I not of the noblest lineage? The beam of light is my Father, and the clear air my Mother; my

Brother is the diamond, and the dew-pearl in the bed of roses is my dear little Sister. The waves of the flood have lifted me up here, I have been permitted to wash over the snow peaks of the primitive mountains, and the first sunbeam that broke through the clouds embroidered my dress with flecks of gold. I am a princess of the purest lineage and really could not go down into the valley. Therefore I preferred to hide myself, pretending to sleep, and old Weser, with the stupid brooks which knew no better than to run into his arms, was at last obliged to go on without me."

The angel shook his head sadly after Ilse's long speech and looked very earnestly and searchingly into her little pale face. While he thus gazed at the frank, blue childish eyes, which to-day emitted bright sparks of anger, he saw dark points lurking in their clear depths and recognized that an evil guest had there taken up his abode.

The devil of pride had already turned the head of many a foolish child, though perhaps never that of a princess royal. The sympathetic angel, perceiving the poor brook's danger, resolved to save it at any cost. In his far-seeing eyes Princess Ilse was nothing but a naughty Child, and therefore he did not address her as Your High-



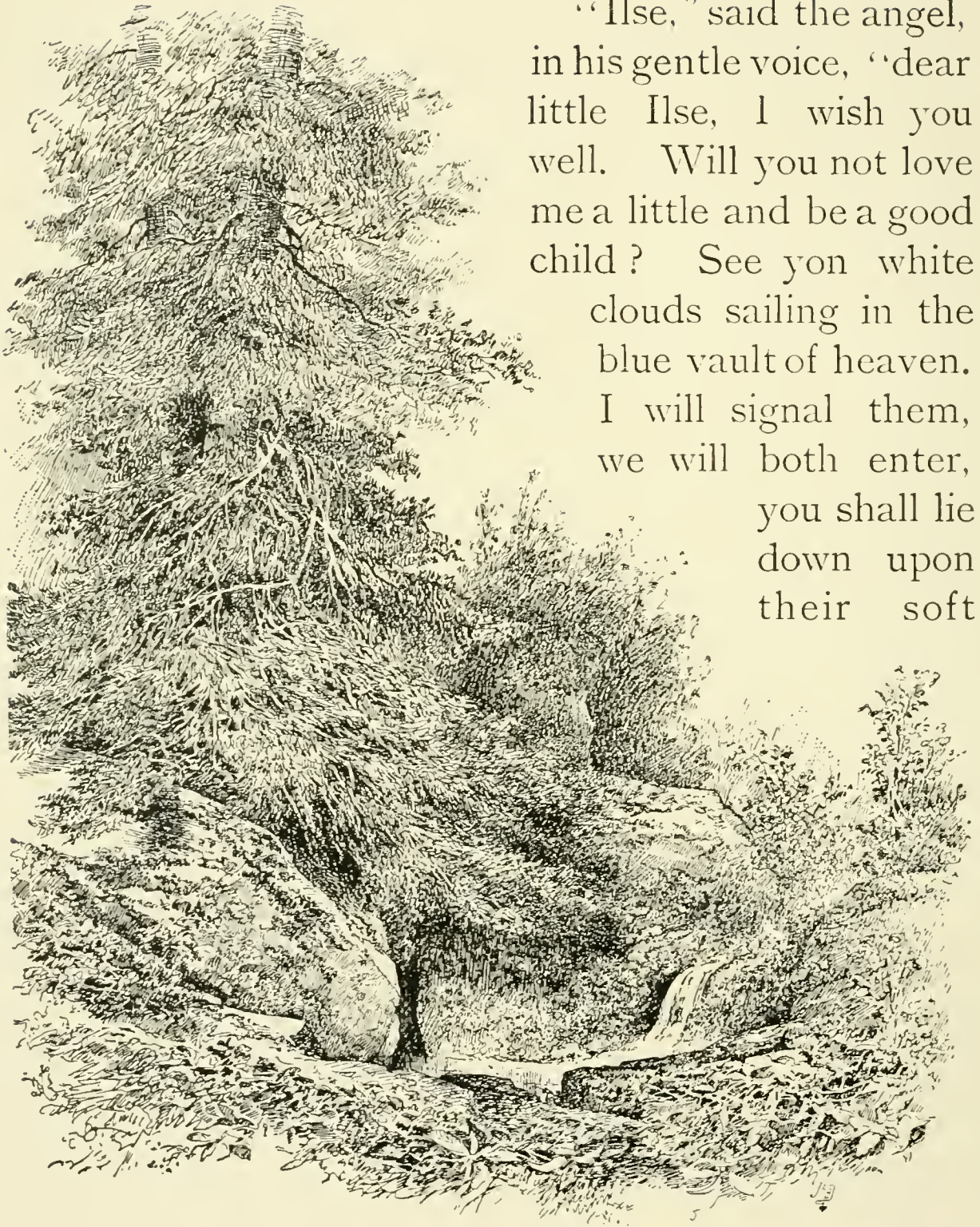
ness or Majesty, but quite simply said: "Dear Ilse, if from choice you have remained up here, and hold it beneath your rank to accompany the other waters down to the plain, then you should be contented where you are, and I do not at all understand why you behave in this manner, crying and lamenting."

"Ah!" responded the wayward one, "when the other waters were gone, dear angel, the storm-wind came sweeping over the mountains, and at sight of me he was in a terrible rage. He scolded and blustered, and roared, and shook me, and wanted to throw me from this cliff down into a deep black abyss where never a ray of light penetrates. I begged and cried and tremblingly clung to the earth, and at last it was my good fortune to escape from his powerful grasp and to hide myself here in this cleft of the rock."

"But you will not always have such good fortune. The storm-wind reigns with a high and lawless hand, so you see it was foolish of you to remain up here, and you will willingly follow if I lead you to the good old Weser and your lost young friends."

"On no account, whatever," cried little Ilse, "I shall remain up here, I am a princess."

“Ilse,” said the angel, in his gentle voice, “dear little Ilse, I wish you well. Will you not love me a little and be a good child? See yon white clouds sailing in the blue vault of heaven. I will signal them, we will both enter, you shall lie down upon their soft



“IN THIS CLEFT OF THE ROCK.”

cushions while I sit near, and they will quickly carry us down into the valley to which the other brooks are going. Then I will lay you in your green bed and remain with you, giving you bright dreams and telling you little tales."

But Princess Ilse was immovably stubborn and cried more and more angrily and haughtily:

"No, no; I don't want to go down, I will not go down," and as the angel came nearer and with gentle force attempted to take her in his arms, she struck him and rudely dashed her spray into his face.

The angel sorrowfully seated himself upon the ground, and little Princess Obstinance crept again into her cleft in the rock, rejoicing that she had displayed so much character, and had given such curt answers to the angel, who still urged her to go with him.

At last, perceiving that all his loving endeavors availed not to influence little Ilse, and that the devil of pride had taken entire possession of her, the good angel sighing, turned away and sought his companions who were still busily employed in finishing their work.



PRINCESS ILSE, when again alone upon the mountain heights, resolved to enjoy her rank to the utmost, and with this in view, came out from among the rocks and sat down upon an overhanging ledge. She spread her hazy garments in broad folds around her, and waited to see if the neighboring summits would not bow before her, and the clouds come down to kiss the hem of her garment. No homage, however, was paid to the proud expectant Princess. Evening came, the sun set and the roaring of the approaching wind sounded in the distance. The poor little brook began anew to weep hot, anxious tears; and however much she prided herself upon her firmness, and rejoiced that she had not followed the angel, still this sweet self-satisfaction could not overcome her fear of the powerful storm-wind.

Darker and darker grew the heavens; heavy, stupefying vapors rose from the abyss, and muttering thunder rolled in the depths below. Little Ilse believed she must perish of fright, and her breath came fast and hard in the heavy, hot air which suddenly enveloped her. Then a beam of light quivered through the darkness and, as the Princess looked up, there stood before her a dark form enveloped in a large, red mantle. Bowing low, it thus addressed her: "Most gracious Princess."

Such a greeting was sweet music in the ears of little Ilse, and while she struggled against her dread of the stranger, she listened to the alluring words which he uttered.

He told her that he had long been in the vicinity, that he had overheard her conversation with the angel, and rejoiced that she had so contemptuously dismissed him; as for himself, he could not conceive how anyone could wish to drag down to the lowlands and conceal in dark valleys so much charm and graciousness. He narrated in glowing colors the brilliant future that awaited her if she would permit him to serve her, describing his cheerful country-seat upon one of Germany's highest and grandest mountains. He would carry her there, surround her with a brilliant court and with

all the pomp and magnificence which befitted her proud rank. There in pleasure and joy she should reign far above all the great and small waters of the earth.

At these fine promises little Ilse's heart throbbed wildly with joyous anticipation. The mysterious form now opened his mantle and drew forth a large, golden vessel which blazed with jewels. Placing it upon the ground, he invited the charming Princess to be seated therein, that he might carry her to his beautiful Brockenberg where numberless servants already prepared for her a merry feast.

Her little Highness did not stop to think, but sprang at once into the golden basin with such joyous haste that the water splattered high up, and a few drops of it fell upon the hand of the dark figure, where it hissingly evaporated, while a burning pain darted through every fiber of her body.

The poor child, startled at last, grasped the edge of the basin as if to fling herself out, and glanced into the dark face above her. But the dish was seized by a powerful hand, and with a laugh, a voice commanded the storm-wind to rush before them, that little Ilse need not fear his overtaking her, then with arrow-like rapidity they

whirled through the air. The little brook, because the pain had so soon departed, became quiet and contentedly allowed herself to be borne away. Little did she dream that she had given herself over to the devil when she entered the jeweled basin, and that it was he, himself, who had offered it to her. Still she may have felt some forebodings as, swayed by the violent motion, she swept along through the gloomy night. She crouched down and drew her garments around her, taking care to lose no more drops, for she now knew how much pain that would cost her.

The night grew clear, slowly the moon ascended in the heavens, and when they at last reached the Brocken, sounds of wild mirth and merry-making, from a motley throng of wierd-looking figures, greeted them.

The Master of the Brocken commanded silence and, placing the dish containing little Ilse upon a high flat stone as upon a throne, he called his merry vassals to form a large circle around her, and to pay her homage as the Water Princess.

That was a blissful moment for little Ilse, who at last felt herself in her rightful sphere. Proudly she rose from the golden basin, a slender column of water. With charming dignity and grace she

bowed her greetings on every hand, then half-ashamed, drooped her little head as a loud exclamation of astonishment sounded throughout the circle. But for child Ilse, possessed with the devil of pride, this was no time for humility. Sweet, intoxicating music resounded in the air, and the enraptured Princess rose and fell, dancing and bubbling in the glittering basin, nodding her curly head and letting clear pearly drops fall tinklingly around her. The good full moon, who is not very punctilious, and who shines upon what comes before him, good or bad, could not refrain from placing upon the vain child's head a delicate crown of tiny silver stars, and as he smiled broadly down upon her, the sweet little one laughingly nodded her thanks to him.

But not every eye in the devil's court regarded the dancing Naiad with rapture and astonishment. There were many vain young witches in the company who considered their beauty and charms unexcelled, and who now, with bitter jealousy and anger, saw another so exalted. Two of these malicious young creatures, with scorn and scoffings, drew near the golden dish.

“How she dances and sways, and seeks to appear beautiful,” said one, “and in spite of all



efforts still remains so thin and lank that one could blow through her. I should like to know how the pale beauty would carry herself if she were to dance with the storm-wind, and allow herself to be swung around in a circle by him in the manner to which we are accustomed."

"Wretched creature," cried another, shrugging her shoulders scornfully, "she will never in her life learn to ride upon a broomstick. But listen how the drums beat and the cymbals clash yonder, we will there dance a merry round, trampling the ground and opening up a deep swamp in which her Highness shall dwell. Then her splendor will be at an end and she must become our obedient servant, the Princess Dish-water."

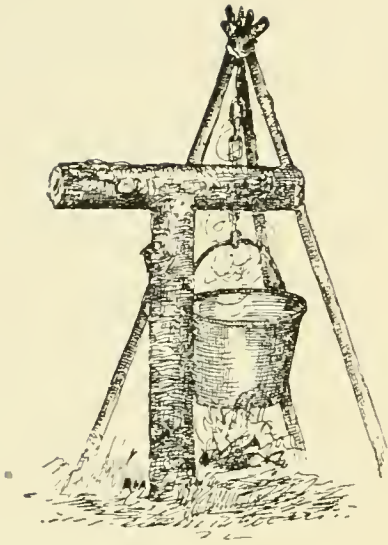
Little Ilse, upon hearing this spiteful conversation, lost all desire for dancing, and sat very quietly in the bottom of her basin, watching the wild forms withdraw to the other side of the mountain and arrange themselves for their wild orgies. She was puzzled with conjectures as to what the ill-omened words of the witches might mean. The taunts relative to the storm-wind had deeply grieved her, but her chief meditation was over the swamp and the Princess Dish-water. No one had ever before applied to her such a degrad-

ing epithet, and it was impossible that she who was to reign here should serve the witches. She thought of asking information of the master of the Brocken whom she now saw approaching, but before she had spoken her thoughts he stood at her side and had laid his hand upon her. At his touch she shuddered with pain, but the devil only laughed and said:

“The night is fresh, most gracious Princess, you feel cold and must be freezing in this shallow vessel. I will have a warm cradle arranged for you by the fire, where you may rest and warm yourself. Only turn your shining head and you will see how the old chief cook of the court is busy stirring the fire, and laying in your bed beautiful playthings with which you may while away the time. Come, let us carry you thither.”

Little Ilse glanced in the direction indicated and saw that a deep, brass kettle was suspended over a bright fire, the glowing flames of which shot far up into the air, while near by stood a hideous old crone throwing into the kettle things so peculiar that little Ilse, who had already become distrustful, would not allow herself to be taken up. She declared that she preferred to watch the dance awhile from afar, the cold suited her very well,

she sat in the high golden dish as comfortably as upon a balcony, was far enough distant not to be annoyed by the dust, could observe everything and would be well entertained. Thereupon her master, assuring her that he had no desire to interfere with her pleasure, but would return for her in hour. an withdrew and sought out the dancers.



HE pleasure of the little Princess had suddenly and decidedly abated as she remained alone watching now the wild, repugnant group of dancers, now the fire and kettle into which the old witch, as she at last clearly perceived, was throwing disgusting animals—spiders, toads, snakes and lizards. The bats, too, which were hovering near the fire, she caught out of the air, and, after breaking their wings, flung them with wild gestures into the kettle.

A deep horror overcame little Ilse as she realized how villainous was the company into which she had fallen, and as she remembered that she was to be put into the kettle to warm herself, it at once became clear to her what the witches had meant when they despised her and called her Princess Dishwater. In mortal terror she pressed her delicate hands together, seized her veil, and crushed it against her white face to smother the cry that welled up from her anxious breast.



SHE SPRANG TO THE EDGE OF THE BASIN.



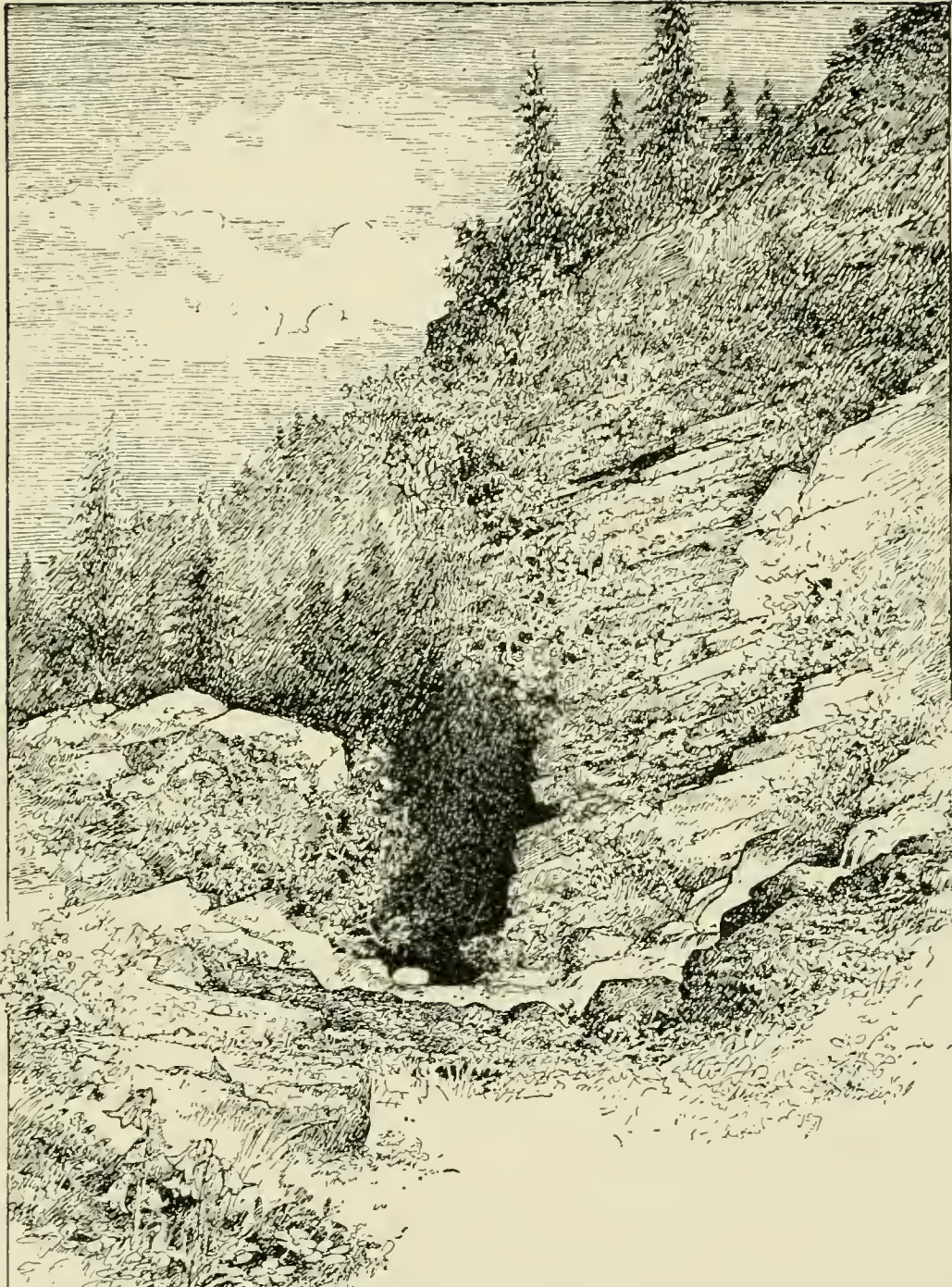
“Oh !” sighed she with tears, “would that I had followed the angel. He wished me well.”

As she looked around in despair and perceived herself to be alone upon one side of the mountain, while the revelers held high carnival upon the other, there came suddenly to her the thought of flight. “Away, away.” And quickly as had come the thought she sprang to the edge of the basin, let her little white feet and transparent clothing hang over the edge and, still clinging with both hands, looked back anxiously to see if anyone was watching her. But none had paid attention to the little Princess, only the good old moon on high laughed at her as before. She laid one dainty finger upon her mouth and looked up at him with tearful eyes full of childish entreaty, and he certainly could not have had the heart to betray her even if he had been asked whither she had fled.

And now little Ilse, seeing that she was unobserved, loosened her hold and attempted to glide noiselessly to the ground. The basin was high, the granite block upon which it stood still higher, and in spite of her care there was a little splashing as she touched the earth; and, anxious lest she should be overheard, she glided nimbly under a

few large stones. She had modestly taken off her crown of stars and left it lying in the basin. The journey to the court had brought her little pleasure, and she thought no longer of being a Princess, but only of escaping quietly and unobserved. Tremblingly she nestled close to the stones and begged them to protect her. They had never before felt such a young pulsing life on their hard breasts, and unutterably affected they pressed so close to the Princess that no eye, not even that of the moon, could espy her. They showed her a little hole in the ground and she, making herself as thin as possible, slipped into it and in the soft earth that padded the strong frame-work of the mountains found a long pathway, formed perhaps by a mole. She groped about in the darkness and felt that the tunnel led gradually downward. After advancing a considerable distance the passage became broad and uneven and followed irregular clefts in the rocks. Stones loosened beneath her tread and rolled down before her into the depths. Still she went on amid the densest night, meeting now and then a sharp current of air. The path, after becoming steeper and more rugged, suddenly appeared to end, the stones opened above her and she saw the clear night-heaven studded with a few





BEHIND HIGH WOODED MOUNTAIN CRESTS  
LAY A DEEP, DARK RAVINE THAT GRADUALLY DESCENDED TO THE VALLEY.



stars, the dull radiance of which revealed an entangled labyrinth of great and small stones. Over these no way was visible. At this instant there pealed forth the wild music, the shrieking and piping of the dancing witches of the Brockenberg, and alarmed by these sounds, child Ilse, who for a moment had loitered, not knowing whither her path led, precipitated herself in breathless haste among the rocks. It mattered little now that she bounded against the hard stones, striking her head and tearing her dress.

“Away, away,” she murmured, “far away where the Prince of the Brocken and his companions cannot discover me.”

The first rosy tint of dawn caused her great anxiety, for, thought she, “the night is still and will not betray me, but the gossipy day will soon prattle abroad my hiding-place.” Bending low, she glided under the stones and only came out now and then to drink a sip of morning air.

Between high, wooded mountain-crests lay a deep, dark ravine that gradually descended to the valley. Into this, little Ilse blindly ran. Numberless stones had crumbled from the mountain-slopes and, grasped by fir-roots and overgrown with moss, lay in confusion at the bottom of the

defile, appearing very stern and gloomy and not at all inclined to get out of the way of the little brook which so hastily and inconsiderately sprang over them.

The good God took pity on poor little Ilse, when haunted by fear she dashed over the stones, and he permitted the woods to open their green doors and take her under their protection.

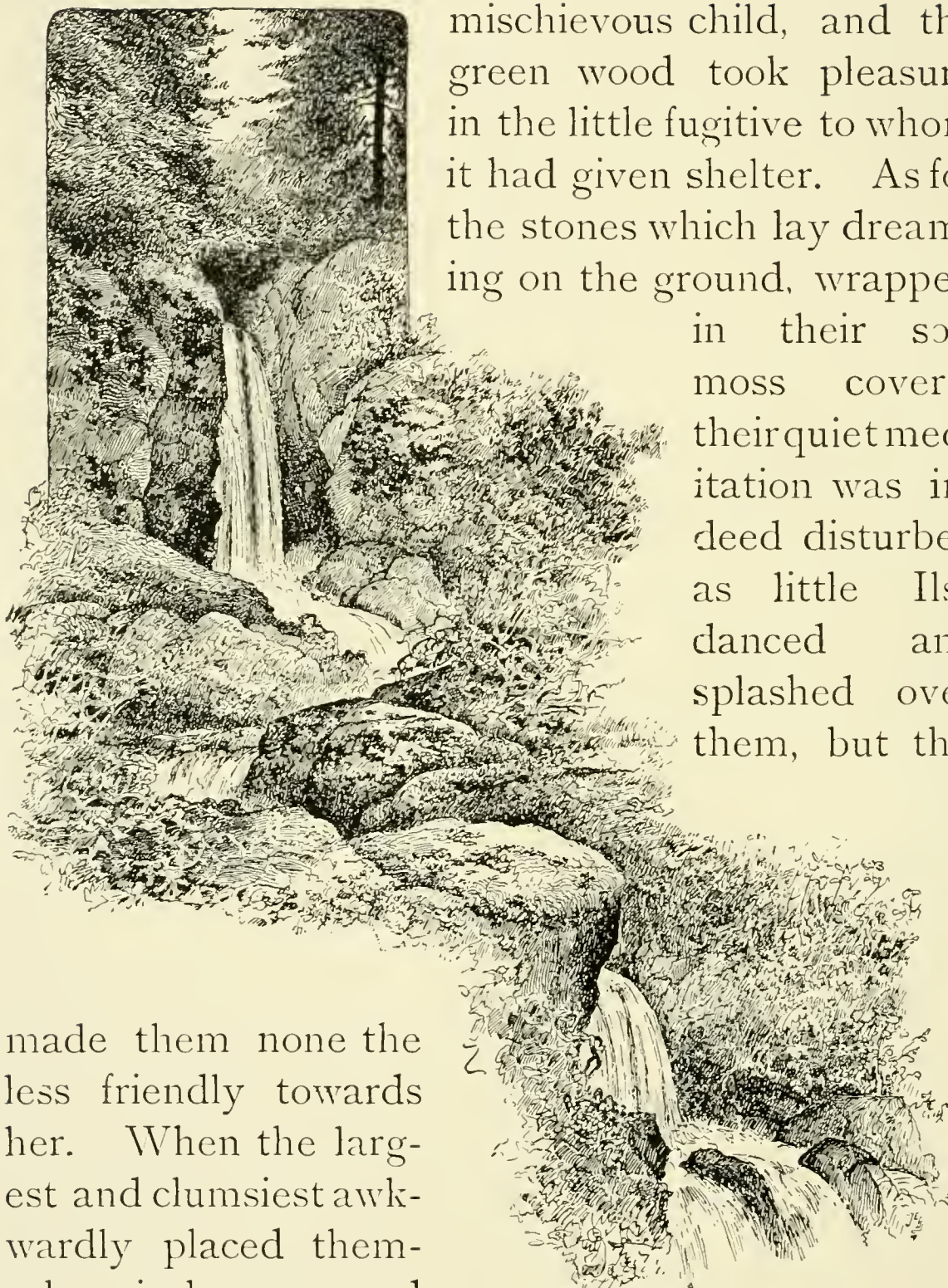
The wood is a sacred asylum for erring children who, out in the world have done or thought evil, and into its peaceful solitude none of the wicked spirits who take possession of young souls can penetrate. The devil of pride must above all remain outside, for how could he be able to stand before the forest king, his earnest Highness, the fir-tree, who stands firm and immovable where the Lord has placed him, though the tempests riot round about—who would rather break and die than allow himself to be bent, by God's grace so truly is he a king.

This the child Ilse did not indeed comprehend as yet, but thought the fir-roots had horrible faces, and she darted shyly over them and flowed deeper and deeper into the woods. That the demon of pride had silently departed from her as, fleeing from the devil and his witches she left

the Brockenberg, that he had been washed away by the tears of repentance and anxiety which she had shed; all this Ilse realized as little as in her frivolity she had been aware that the devil had entered into her. But she felt herself freer and more concealed in the green shade of the woods, behind the golden lattice bars which the sun's rays, falling obliquely, made across the sward.

The farther she separated herself from the Brocken the more comfortable and serene she became. The firs did not seem to look so grimly and threateningly at her as at first, and soon grave venerable oaks spread their powerful arms protectingly above her; and light, friendly beeches pressing forward among the black firs nodded pleasantly and took pains to seize the sunbeams in their outstretched branches, that they might cast them at her like golden arrows.

Little Ilse, who childlike soon forgot her sorrow, merrily threaded her way among the trees, and when, in the boisterous play a sunbeam fell to the ground, she caught it up, held it exultingly in the air, or thrust it through her veil. Afterwards in bounding along, she tossed it coquettishly to the flowers and grasses that stood by her path watching her with curiosity. She was again a happy

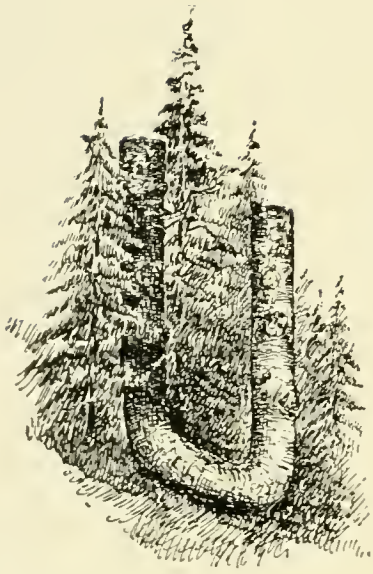


mischievous child, and the green wood took pleasure in the little fugitive to whom it had given shelter. As for the stones which lay dreaming on the ground, wrapped in their soft moss covers, their quiet meditation was indeed disturbed as little Ilse danced and splashed over them, but this

made them none the less friendly towards her. When the largest and clumsiest awkwardly placed themselves in her way and

BOUNDED FROM CLIFF TO CLIFF.

would not let her pass, she caressed their rough cheeks with her delicate hands and murmured sweet entreaties in their ears; but if all this was of no avail she became angry, impatiently stamped her little foot and pushed against them so violently as to make the older ones totter. Then if only a little crevice lay open before her she plunged into it, pushed the lazy stones aside and wild and unchecked shot by them. Where the ravine was very steep and rough it was charming to see how the little Princess courageously bounded from cliff to cliff. Upon these occasions she donned a dainty white foam cap and, when it became crushed and broken on a sharp point of rock, she found at the next boulder another at hand, white as Alpine snow and freshly fluted.



PON many sunny mountain-slopes, luxuriantly carpeted with grass and moss, the large trees had withdrawn, leaving open places for the fir-children who were there in troops growing and learning how to become trees. They sat upon the ground with their stiff dresses bunched out upon the grass, and moved their sharp little heads thoughtfully back and forth, wondering that Ilse did not become weary of racing and jumping.

The youngest springs, which had scarcely learned to run, were not so cautious as the little fir-children, for when they heard Ilse gurgling forth her sweet song, they came trickling out of the crevices in the rocks, and stealthily glided through the moss ever nearer and nearer to her.

She heard their low rustling, saw them approaching and motioned to them to hasten. At sight of the Princess, bounding over the stones so far below, the tiny springs remained anxiously





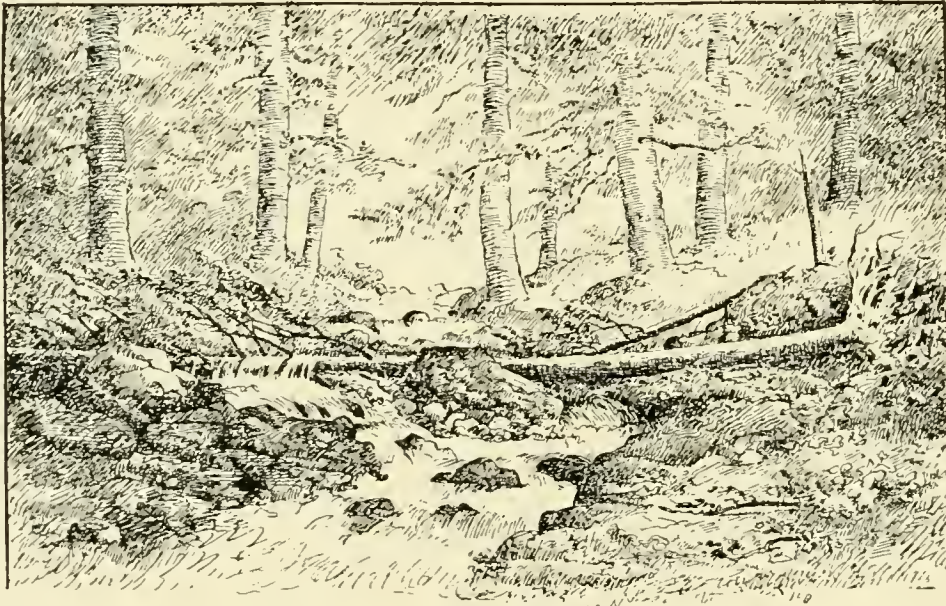


watching her, not daring to leap down, yet finding no other way. Ilse lured them with ringing voice, infused into them her own courage and re-adjusted the firm stone footstools thickly upholstered with moss, by means of which they could descend to her. And the springs taking heart, jumped boldly from one small, green stone to another. Ilse caught them up when they plunged headlong into her lap, took them by the hand and said: "Come, now you shall run with me, watch carefully and leap always when I leap. I will hold you so that you cannot fall." And the little springs did as they were bidden. They grasped Ilse's hand and skipped unharmed from stone to stone, knowing no fear and learning to spring and run so well that had they too worn a white foam-cap they would hardly have been distinguishable from the little Princess.

The devil of the Brockenberg was furious over Ilse's flight. He well knew that so pure a creature was no booty for him, moreover the demon of pride, his best aid in seizing young souls, had already gone out of little Ilse, how then should he undertake to capture the aerial child? He be-thought himself at last of the north-wind, who of old had terrified her; and, summoning him, he

commanded him to roar up the valley in the face of the little Princess. "This," thought he, "will compel her to turn about, and will drive her back to the Brocken."

The north-wind took all possible pains to fulfil the devil's command; he did his utmost at roaring and storming, he shook the trees until even their



roots quaked, and he hurled their broken branches upon the ground at Ilse's feet. A young fir, which had not yet obtained a firm footing in the steep wall of rock, he threw across her path, and finally seized her by her waving veil and endeavored to drag her away with him. But the little Princess tore herself loose, heeding not how much of her



THE BEECHES STOOD SHIVERING, AND IN FRIGHT THE SEARED LEAVES FELL  
TO THE GROUND.



veil remained in his rough grasp. She thought no longer of self and felt no fear, being conscious of nothing but the need of her dear trees, and would willingly have helped them struggle had she been able. Mournfully approaching the overturned tree, she threw herself upon it and pityingly washed its wounds. The little green beech and oak twigs which the north-wind cast into her lap, she rocked tenderly in her soft arms, kissed their faded leaves and carrying them a little way with her, tenderly laid them away to rest on swaying beds of moss along her path.

In the meantime the devil stood upon the Brocken and furiously gnashed his teeth at seeing how vainly the north-wind exerted himself, accomplishing nothing with little Ilse.

“Now I will send winter,” muttered he to himself, “he shall bind and fetter her—barren, grey winter with hunger and cold, with long, dark nights in which temptation is rife and sin stealthily pursues its secret ways. He has already driven many a poor soul to me and will certainly conquer the slender water princess.”

“You, north-wind, bestir yourself, shake untiringly the leaves from the trees and prepare the way for winter, who you know will not appear

until with heavy tread he can rustle through the foliage.”

And the north-wind, like an obedient servant, again blustered wild and icy through the valley. The beeches stood shivering, and in fright let their seared leaves fall to the ground. The tips of the oaks became red with cold, and the foliage dropped from the trees whose naked boughs looked apprehensively at the invader. Only the fir remained unmoved and wore as usual his dark-green, kingly mantle.

Little Ilse, at his side, not comprehending to what all this tended, thus ill-naturedly gave vent to her feelings:

“Well, well; you crazy trees, of what are you thinking? Why do you cast all these dry leaves into my face, do you no longer love little Ilse, and do you wish to scratch her eyes out with your brown acorns and hard beechnuts?”

Angrily the little one sprang up and shook the leaves out of her locks and from the shimmering folds of her dress.

By this time winter had arrived at the Brocken and had been clothed in a thick mantle by his satanic majesty. Thus equipped he advanced slowly over the heights and descended heavily into



the valley. At first his real character was disguised, for he had velvety paws, and to ingratiate himself with the trees and bushes, he decked them with glittering robes of white frost until little Ilse, dazzled by such splendor, did not know which way to turn. Then came flakes of snow, reeling, eddy-



INDUSTRIOUSLY WORKED TO WASH AWAY THE SNOW.

ing out of the air, and the little Princess at first believed them to be the clouds come down to visit her and renew the acquaintance made upon the Alpine summits. But as winter spread his cold, white covering, ever thicker and heavier, over the entire ravine, burying under it tree-roots, mosses,

plants and the trembling, yellow grass-blades, little Ilse became afraid at heart and felt that her turn would soon come. She was already deeply grieved on account of her dear verdure, and as she industriously worked to wash away the snow from all the stones within her reach, and thus set free the delicate little mosses which clung to them, she felt with horror that sharp, icy points were penetrating her own tender body. She saw, too, that winter had forged hard, shining links on stones and roots, and knew this chain, with ever lengthening, crystal rays, would finally bind them fast. Stern winter next touched with his icy hand the tender breast of little Ilse. Chills darted through her and she clasped the gnarled roots of the fir tree and looked beseechingly up at the forest king. She saw that he also was shrouded in the white garb of winter, but from underneath radiated his boughs still wearing their own deep perennial green, and their mild luster fell warm and soothingly upon the poor child and inspired her with power and new life.

“ Oh, fir tree,” cried Ilse, “ how are you able to defy winter and remain living and green in his icy arms? Can I not learn this also? ”

“ Because I am founded upon a rock,” replied the fir tree, “ and my head reaches toward heaven ;

therefore the Lord gives me power to remain green throughout all time. And you, little Ilse, are a rock-stream and reflect in your clear waters the light of heaven as undimmed as you receive it. If the true life is in you, the inner force which the Lord gives, you will be enabled to overcome winter, therefore trust in God, exert yourself and do not grow discouraged."

"You dear fir," replied little Ilse, "I will become strong and good like yourself, and winter shall not prevail over me."

Tearing herself with a powerful wrench from the icy arms that clutched her, trying to fasten her clothing between the stones, she shot with a wild bound into the valley, shattering all detaining fetters.

Old winter, who could not keep pace with such a lithe, young creature, sat sulkily in the snow, obliged to acknowledge his impotence and the impossibility of seizing the agile child.

The following day, as Ilse in her victorious joy, sprang untiringly along, driving before her the splinters of ice which she had severed from the stones, the mosses by the bank called out:

"Oh, Ilse, dear Ilse, stay with us, the snow presses so heavily upon our heads that we can no

longer hold ourselves up. Help us, dear Ilse, help us."

And Princess Ilse in pity bowed down to them and, carefully raising a corner of the heavy snow cover, thrust her sweet face beneath and whispered to the mosses the wisdom which she had learned from the fir tree.

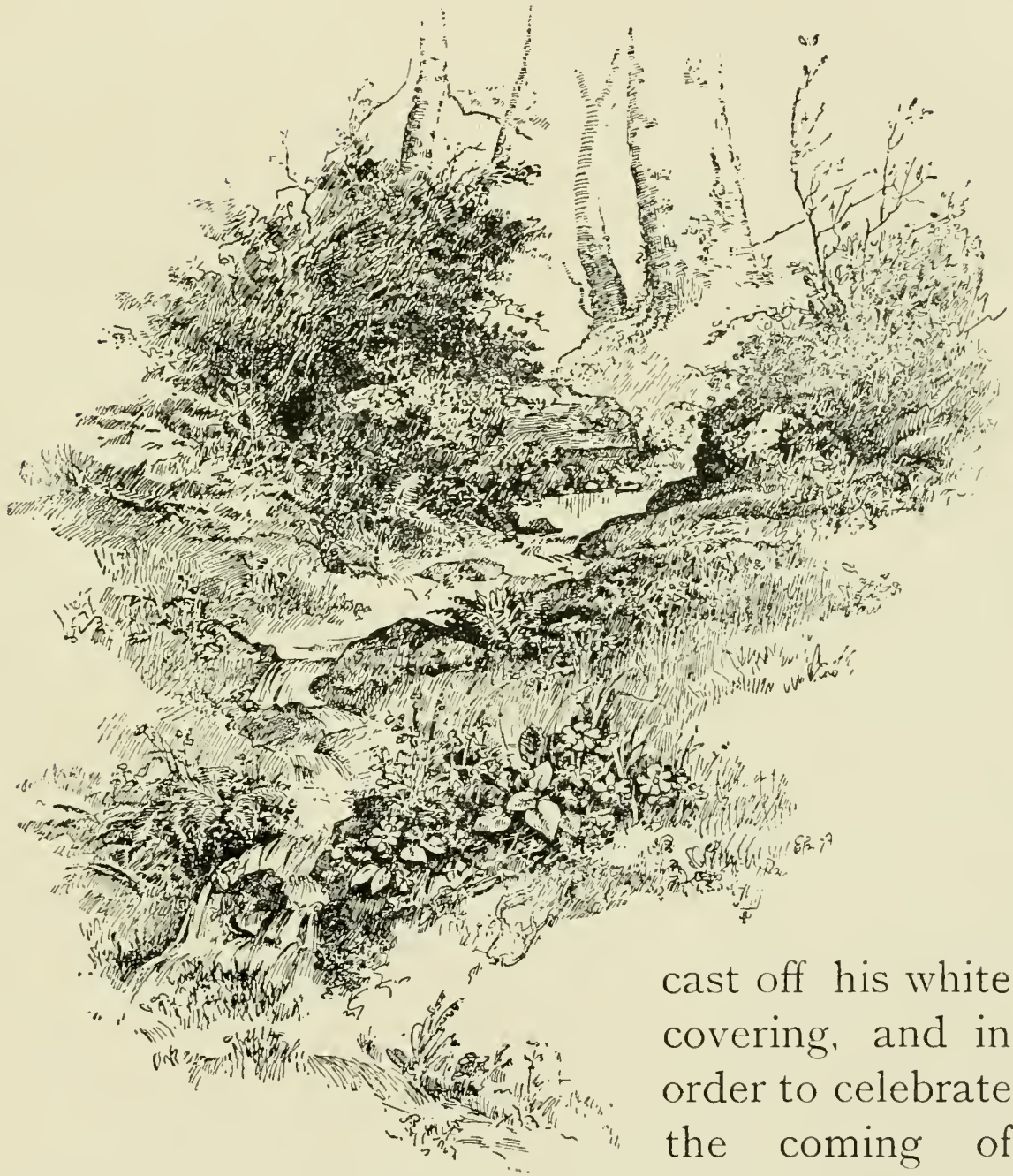
"You are founded upon a rock, little mosses, and the good God allows you to remain green under the cold snow, therefore remember that divine life is in you, and endeavor to be strong and to raise yourselves and to grow under the white wintry covering. The dear God will help you if you will call upon Him."

Immediately the mosses began to move and, becoming warm from the exertion, cried joyfully:

"Ilse, Ilse; we are standing erect again, and the snow yields when we seize it with our warm hands."

Thus little Ilse taught her play-comrades, the mosses and grasses, to develop and use their strength and to bid defiance to winter. She gave to the little grasses of her fresh and living water, and encouraged them to grow and to respond to the first greeting of spring when he at last came into the valley, stripping the snow covering from

the earth and banishing winter to the Brocken. A little later old winter was chased from even that retreat by the warm sun. Now the fir tree, too,



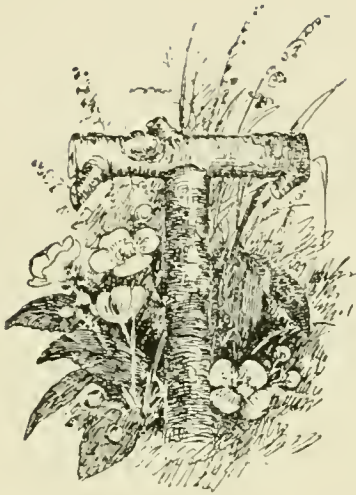
cast off his white covering, and in order to celebrate the coming of

SHE GAVE TO THE LITTLE GRASSES OF HER FRESH AND LIVING WATER.

spring, set clear, green lights on all the tips of his dark branches. The oaks and beeches again drew on their green dresses, and little Ilse lived joyously in the still, beautiful woods during many, many hundred years.

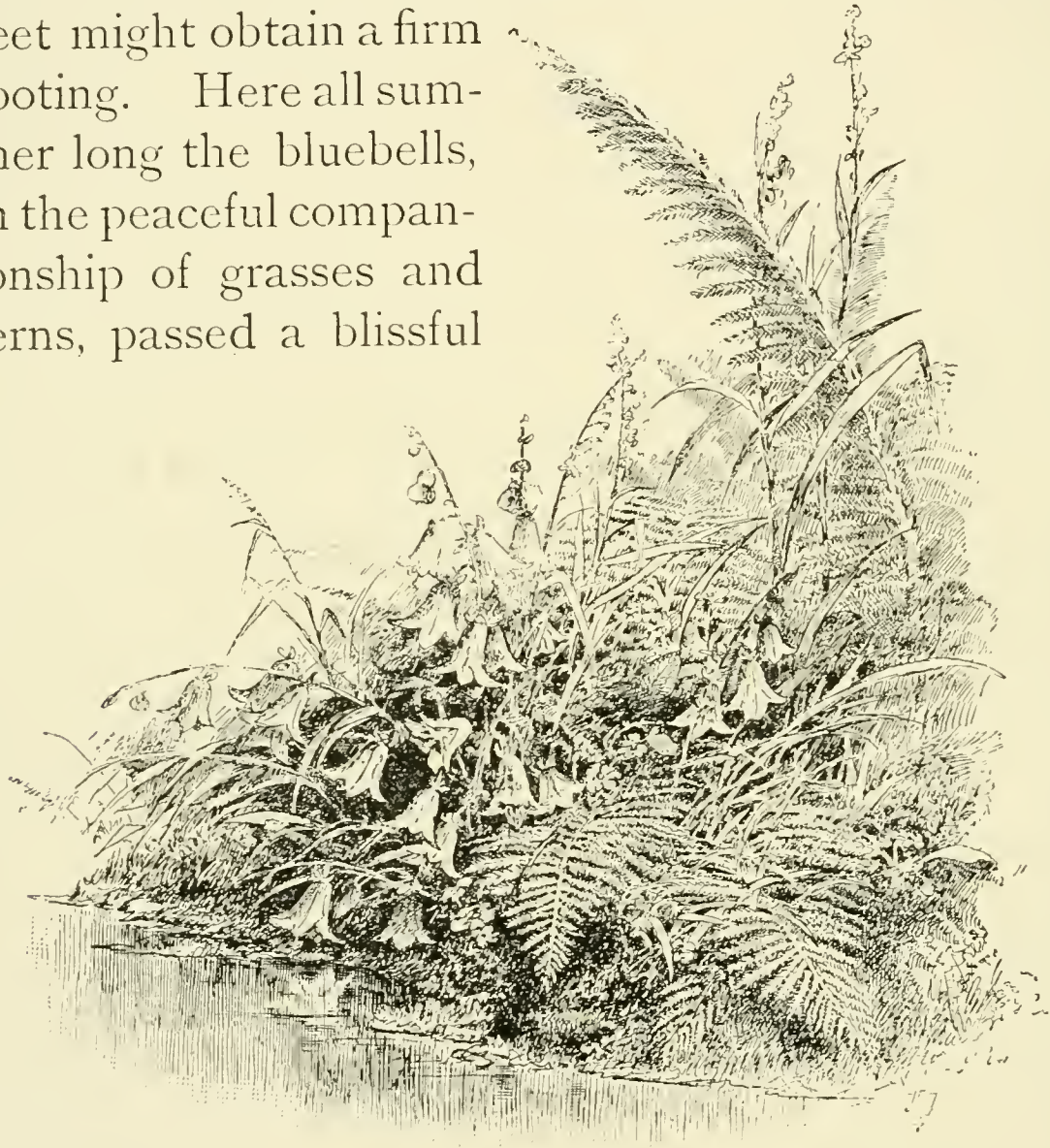
It is true winter returned every year and carried on the same cruel sport with trees and plants, and set his glistening traps for little Ilse, but the active, powerful child did not allow herself to be caught. Nimbly and slippery as a little lizard, she escaped always from his rough grasp. Each year, also, the trees renewed their verdure, and never did they appear more beautiful and fresh than in the springtime, as if the hard battle with winter had strengthened and revived them. And Ilse, too, was most beautiful and beaming when the snow had melted in the mountains and she, in exuberant wantonness, ran boisterously through the woods.

Snow is a healthful draught for little mountain brooks, and the deeper they quaff it the better do they thrive.



HE green wood was proud of its dear foster-child, the little Ilse, because she no longer considered herself, but thought only of her precious trees and plants, and of how she could perform some labor of love for them. But, now that she was indifferent to her high rank, the trees and flowers, the stones, the slender grasses and the mosses held her high and worthy, and paid her homage in their still inmost beings. Herbs and flowers pressed about her feet and kissed the hem of her dress and her swaying veil, and the tall, slender grass-stalks, which stood whispering by her path, swung their delicate little feathered hats in greeting. The thoughtful bluebells, dearest of the flower-children of the woods, loved little Ilse and longed to be with her. They approached, bowed low over her forehead and looked at her meditatively, like pious thoughts. Yes, they even stepped upon the smooth, wet stones which Ilse

held clasped in her arms; and the little Princess kissed them tenderly and spread a soft carpet of moss over the slippery stones that their little fibrous feet might obtain a firm footing. Here all summer long the bluebells, in the peaceful companionship of grasses and ferns, passed a blissful



fairy-like existence, as upon an enchanted island. The ferns, with their stately green fans, wafted cooling breezes to their beloved Ilse, and, roguishly



coquetting with the sunbeams, tried to prevent them from kissing her. But the sunbeams so loved the child that, as often as the grey clouds upon the mountain permitted, they came down into the valley and played with her under the trees. The clouds were in olden times appointed the guardians of the sunbeams. They often grew so heavy and unwieldy that they would hardly have moved from one spot had not the storm-wind occasionally thrust his broom among them and driven them apart. The sight of their light-footed protégés, dancing and sporting with little Ilse in the verdure below, annoyed them almost beyond endurance, and they often sat entire days upon the mountain as impenetrable as a wall, letting not the smallest sunbeam escape. Moreover, they splashed rain down into the valley, and with inward satisfaction beheld little Ilse flowing along, lonely and sorrowful. Such morose conduct made the sunbeams quite wild and impatient. Passing to and fro behind their old guards, they scoffed at them and goaded them with sarcastic remarks until, in desperation, the grey clouds silently withdrew. Then the way being again clear, the sunbeams would slip down into the woods, rock themselves in the raindrops which still hung on the trees, and often while away

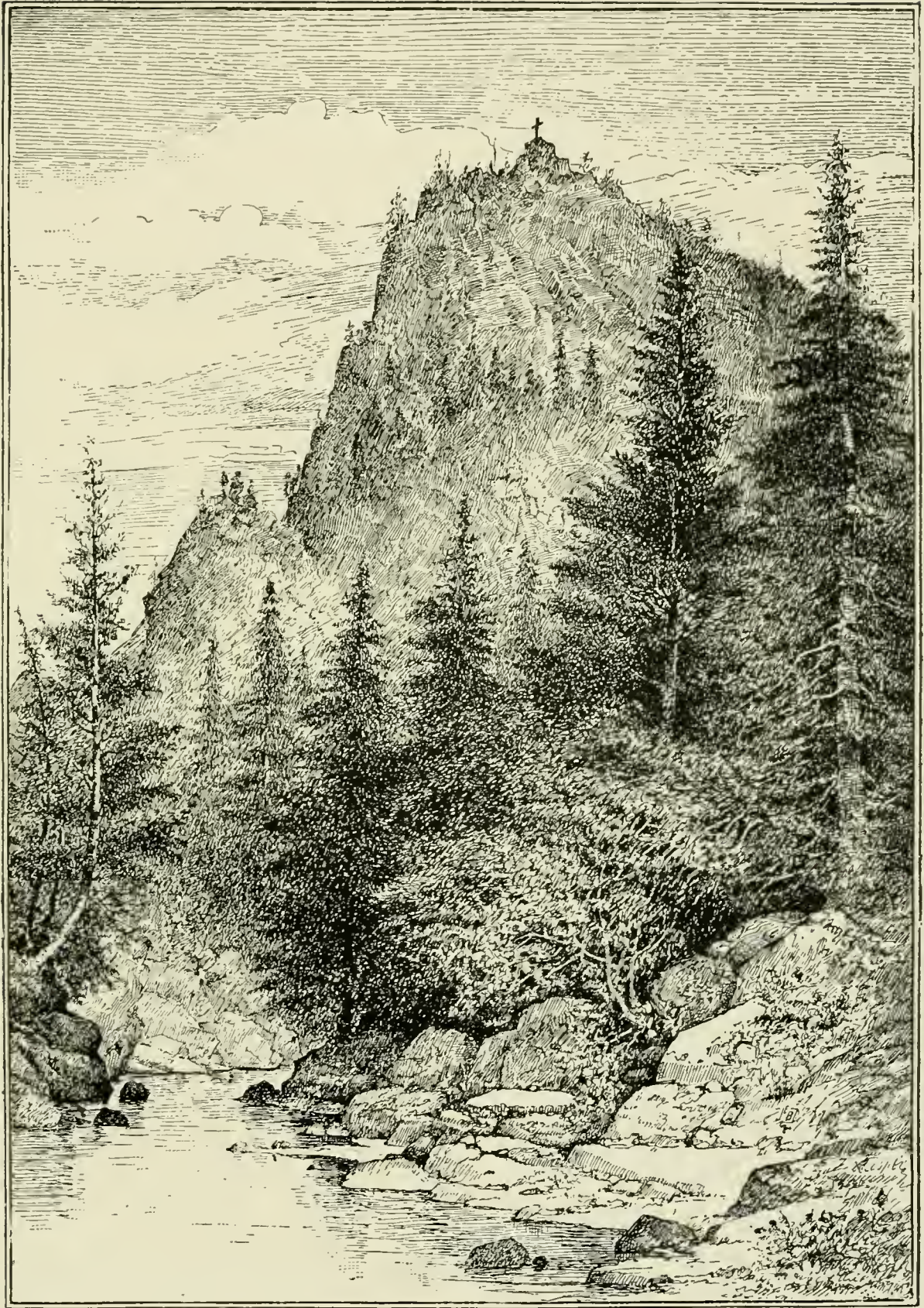
the entire day running races in the grass with little Ilse.

Once, while engaged in this sport, a white strawberry blossom, whose very numerous family is scattered over all the valleys of the Hartz mountains, secretly glided up and mirrored her small,



round face in the glittering dress of the little Princess. But Ilse espied her, and with a shake of the finger said:

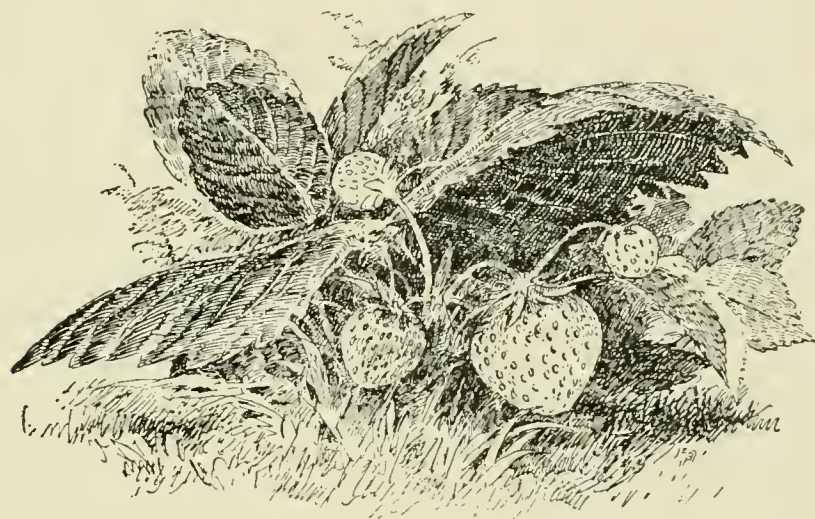
“Oh, oh! you strawberry blossom, you are vain on account of that little golden jewel on your forehead, and come here to mirror and admire yourself.”



THE ILSSENSTEIN.



The frightened strawberry-blossom let her leaves fall and crept quickly under the green foliage, but the sunbeams, springing laughingly after her, sought her out, and the poor blossom, ashamed of being discovered, blushed deeper and deeper at each glance of the sunbeams until finally her face was dyed crimson. She nestled behind a green



leaf and let her little head droop in shame, and even to the present day, remembering how openly her vanity was reprov'd, she blushes before the sunbeams and hangs her lovely head.

The good full moon, Ilse's old friend, also came frequently to visit her. Not deterred by the difficult journey over the mountains, he rose above the most beautiful peak of the lofty chain, the Ilsenstein, named by the people in the valley after the

little Princess. He kindly looked down upon his darling, who was purling and rippling in the shadow



CHARCOAL PITS.

of the mountains and playing pretty games with the little silver stars which he threw down to her.

In the valley that formed little Ilse's home, human beings had also come to dwell. Of these the Princess was at first very shy, but the fir tree took much loving pains to reassure and educate her, until she became accustomed to their presence and was even friendly with them.

The first men who came into the woods were a few charcoal burners who there built a hut, felled trees and constructed and lighted their pits.

Little Ilse shed many, many tears at the sight of her dear trees cut down by the sharp ax and lying dead upon the ground, and she also mourned and wept for the grasses and flowers when a path was trodden by man through the wilderness and they were crushed to the earth.

The flames which shot out of the charcoal pits reminded her of that night of terror upon the Brocken, and at first caused her the greatest horror. She learned, however, from the fir-tree that man, whom God has fashioned after his own image, is the lord of creation, and that all other beings are destined to serve him; moreover, that every tree must live out its allotted time, and must then fall to the ground whether it be by the hand of man, by the thunderbolt from heaven, by fire or by decay which eats out the life within. The fir tree

also told her that she should not be alarmed by fire, as it is a sacred power that works much good



A PATH THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

upon earth when wisely employed; that she would hereafter learn to comprehend this and draw near



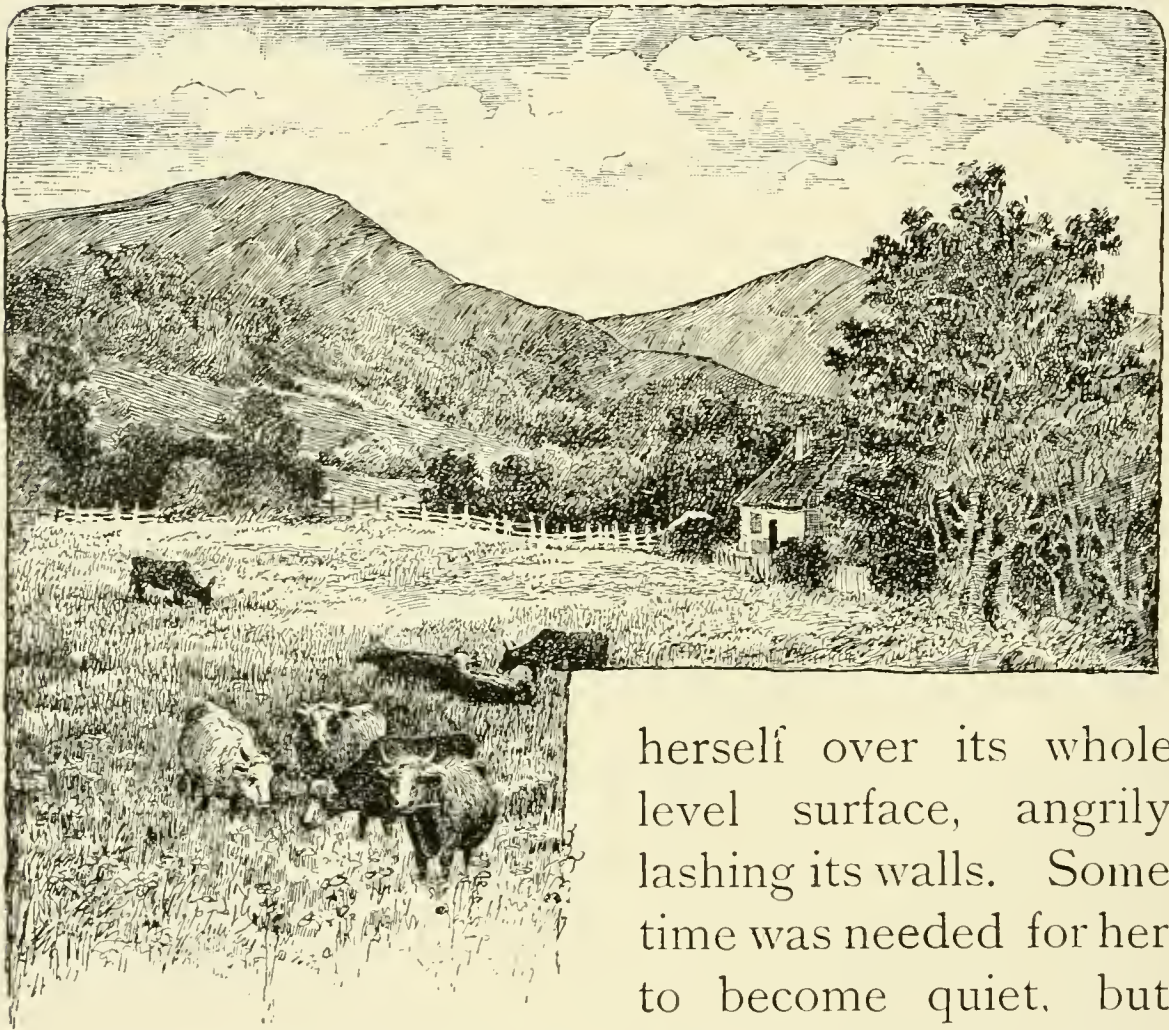
it, would even reach out her hand to it and willingly work in its company.

Princess Ilse certainly did not rejoice over the time when she should come near to the fire and join it in labor, but she had profound respect for the opinion of the fir tree and received his words unquestioningly

Again a long time elapsed and more men came into the valley with axes and spades; they brought cattle and goats with them which they drove into the green mountain pastures and into the meadows.

A short distance below the Ilsenstein, at the widening of the valley, they felled many trees and converted them into boards and beams. With these they constructed houses, in which they dwelt with their wives and children. They dug out a wide bed for the little Princess close by her path, protected its walls with stones and turf, and made a large door in one side. Then, when all was ready, they came to Ilse and invited her to enter and to make herself comfortable therein. The little Princess politely refused and attempted to dart past them as she did by all things else, but the men barred her path with stones and earth which they called a dam, and tore away a great stone that had protected her side. Being under

full motion she could not pause, but with all her might rushed through the opening, flung herself upon the bed which was styled a pond, and spread



THEY BROUGHT CATTLE AND GOATS  
WITH THEM.

herself over its whole level surface, angrily lashing its walls. Some time was needed for her to become quiet, but when finally she had calmed herself she looked inquiringly up at the forest king, who stood unharmed near the gable of the newly erected house.

Smiling sadly, he thus spoke: "Culture is approaching, little Ilse, and soon the freedom and quiet of our beautiful wood will be gone."



FLUNG HERSELF UPON THE BED WHICH WAS STYLED A POND.

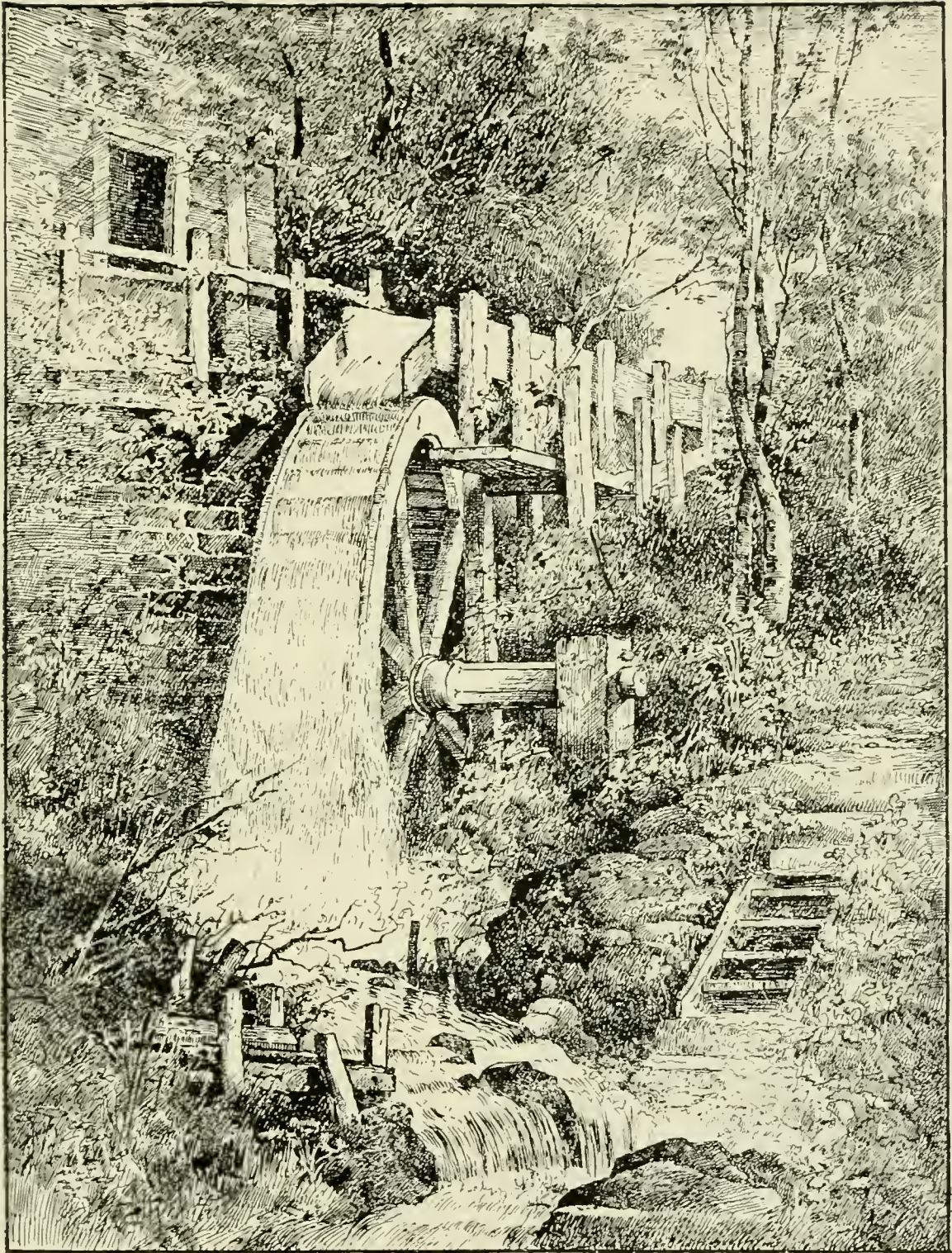
"Culture," sighed Ilse, "Oh, surely that must be of the devil. They who cut down so many of God's dear trees and after removing the bark, hew

them in pieces, surely cannot have anything good in their minds."

"Poor child," laughingly replied the fir tree, "What will you say when you make the acquaintance of industry, the grand-daughter of culture, who is a digger after treasures, who ransacks the earth in search of gold and would not spare the last tree if it stood in her way. She destroys the forests and builds factories with ugly chimneys that reach to heaven. Wherever she enters, poetry is at an end."

Little Ilse clasped her hands and looked so troubled that the fir tree added:

"Do not be disquieted, for a long time must elapse before industry will come near us. She does not choose mountains as her dwelling place, but more readily adapts herself to the level land, and we will pray the good God to protect our peaceful valley from her encroachments. But culture is a faithful servant of the Lord. She brings with her prosperity and the sacred writings, and she has already entered the valley below, as the echoes tell us in the sounds of the matin and vesper bells. The Emperor has presented the Bishop with the castle which stands at the end of the valley, and the Bishop has allowed pious monks to there found



SPRANG NIMBLY AND CAREFULLY FROM ONE ROUND TO ANOTHER.



a monastery. In service of these holy men, others also have come and built."

Little Ilse at last comprehended what the fir tree had told her, and acquired more confidence in mankind. After resting awhile in the pond she looked about her and discovered, almost underneath, a powerful newly built mill-wheel. At the same moment the miller's curly-headed boy, who was standing upon a slender bridge, laughingly called out:

"Oh, look down, Princess Ilse, the door will soon be opened and then the dance will begin when you will spring merrily over the wheel."

"Shall I then be shattered upon the wheel?" thought the poor child looking with beating heart upon the gigantic cylinder. But it began to creak and groan and whispered to her:

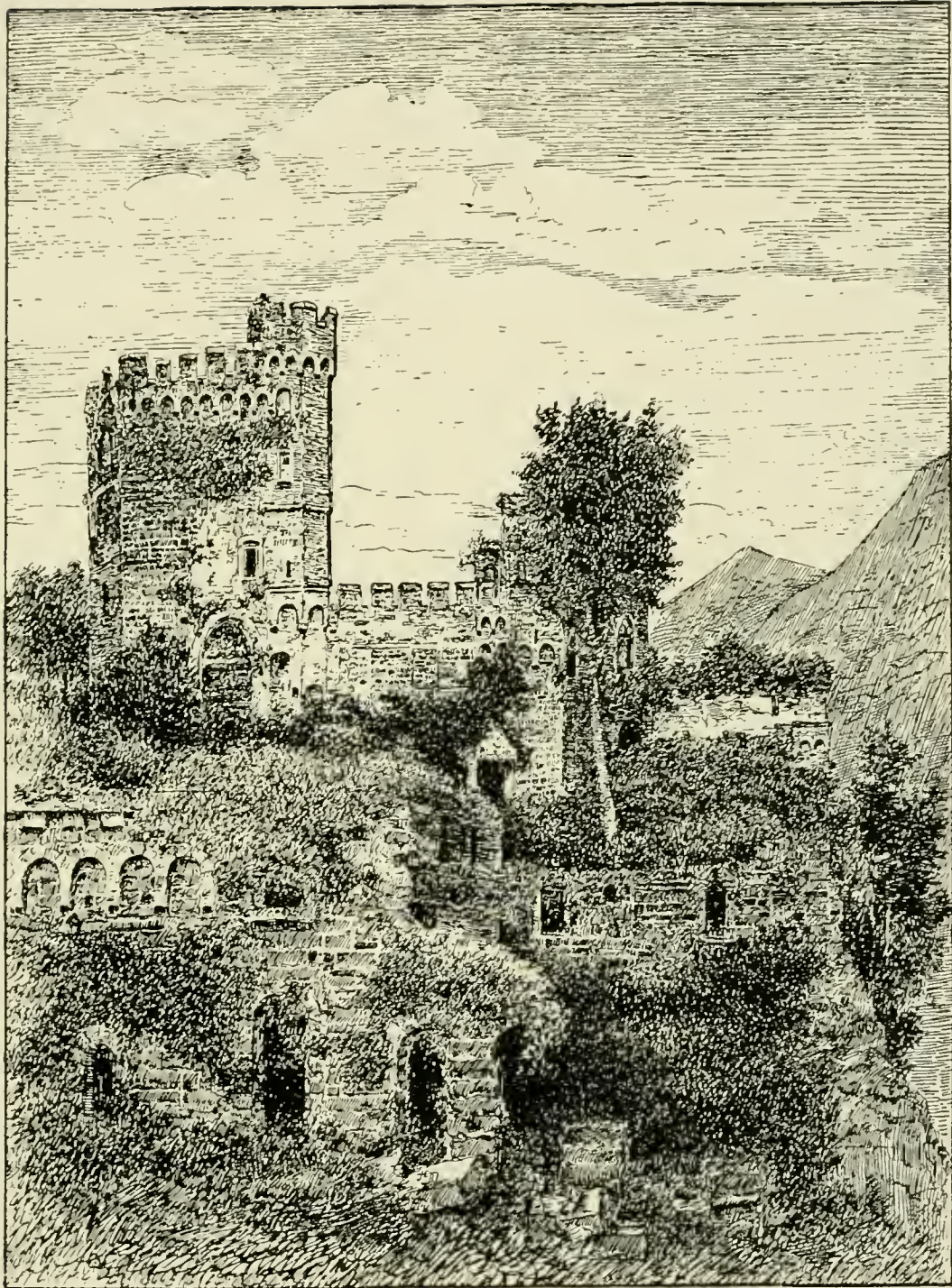
"Do you not know us, little Ilse? We are the wood of your dear trees, do you recognize us no more? You need not fear, for we will do you no harm."

The miller now stepped forward, prepared to draw open the door and cheerfully exclaimed:

"Now come down, little Ilse, you have rested long enough in the pond; come, bestir yourself and help us work."

The little Princess lost her shyness, for was she not with her friends, and leaping quickly upon the great wheel and gathering her shimmering dress about her, with light feet she sprang nimbly and carefully from one round to another until they began to yield under her dainty tread. Her veil swayed in the wind and she tossed her foam-cap up into the air. At length the wheel turned and Ilse, leaping from its last round, rushed shouting along the mill-race, while the wheel continued its mighty revolutions and the mill kept time. From every round of the great wheel dropped silver-clear chains of pearls which had escaped from the damp locks of the Princess.





STOLBERG CASTLE.





LITTLE ILSE had now become a worker in the service of man, a river of life and prosperity for the valley and its inhabitants. She labored with the men in the stamping mill and iron foundry where she made the dreaded acquaintance of the fire, and it soon came to pass that the fire reciprocated her aversion, standing as much in awe of her as she of him. They therefore came no nearer together than was necessary to advance their work, and when it was done each pursued his respective way.

Princess Ilse went to the women and children in their dwellings and helped them with their household duties. She washed and bathed the children, watered the flowers and vegetables, was not ashamed of menial service and had no cause to be, for she lost none of her inborn nobility in the performance of humble works of love among the children of men.

Centuries rolled by after little Ilse first set her

foot upon the mill-wheel. As the teachings of Luther spread abroad throughout the land, the monks left the old monastery upon the mountain and a noble race of counts took their place. For a long, long time they flourished and ruled upon the Ilsenberg, the little Princess serving them and their adherents as she had served the monks and their followers.

When, eventually, the castle began to fall into ruin, and the Counts Stolberg chose another and a stronger one for their residence, they took care that Ilse and her beloved valley should not suffer from the change. They allowed industrious men to build in her vicinity and to work in company with her, to discover iron, the powerful marrow of the mountain, to make it into steel and to give it a form suited to the needs of man.

Little Ilse could be seen busily at work from early until late, never becoming discontented or fatigued over the hard labor. Whoever met her in the valley, as in her glistening purity she emerged from the woods, must immediately have recognized in her a Princess of royal blood, the daughter of light, and in his heart have paid her homage.

Still the child Ilse had not become a saint.



EMERGING FROM THE WOODS.



When the dear God occasionally allowed a thunder storm to break over her, stirring her being to its depths and bringing to light the concealed sins and shortcomings of which no dweller upon earth, even the highest born, is quite free, she was greatly grieved at the dark and stained appearance of her waves. However, she let the thunder storm serve her as the storms of life should serve everyone, to bring a knowledge of self and to refine. When all impurities were separated from her and washed away, she flowed on in splendor and strength, letting the imprisoned light of heaven radiate from her in renewed power and beauty.

Still another bitter sorrow was in store for little Ilse. As a result of the continued advancement, a broad highway came creeping up the valley. Men rooted up the green forest sod, laid low many gigantic trees, and with sharp weapons secured the way which they could only obtain by force.

“That I cannot endure, to that I will not become reconciled,” cried little Ilse in deep indignation. “Shall the tiresome people with French names here drag out, year after year, their comfortable, snail-like existence; playing the part of a master and calling imperiously to me:

“Gently, slowly, Ilse, don't come too near the

flowers; don't spring so Ilse; see how sedately we go along. Look, how staid the wooden bridge that around the rocky corner invitingly beckons to you from out the oak's green shade."

In wild anger the little Princess dashed and foamed against the wall of rock which supported the highway, longing to undermine it and give the hated French a fall.

"Ilse, Ilse," warned the fir tree from his rocky ledge, "what mad child's play is this? Have you not yet learned that we must all endure whatever conduces to the pleasure and profit of man? If we trees submit to the highway you certainly can do the same. We are not pleased, either, to see the grey, dust-colored dress of the valley trailing up here. But for shame, Ilse, see how the witches upon yonder slope are laughing at you."

The evil spirits upon the Brocken had been dispersed since Christian men had there taken up their abode, and now witches and little devils, under various disguises, wandered up and down the land, assuming most beautiful and enticing forms in order to deceive poor souls and lure them into their dark kingdom. But a troop of young witches, who had always retained a grudge against little Ilse, because she had exceeded them all in nobility





THE STAID WOODEN BRIDGE.



and charm, came down every summer into the valley to watch her and at least to cloud her happiness if they could do no more.



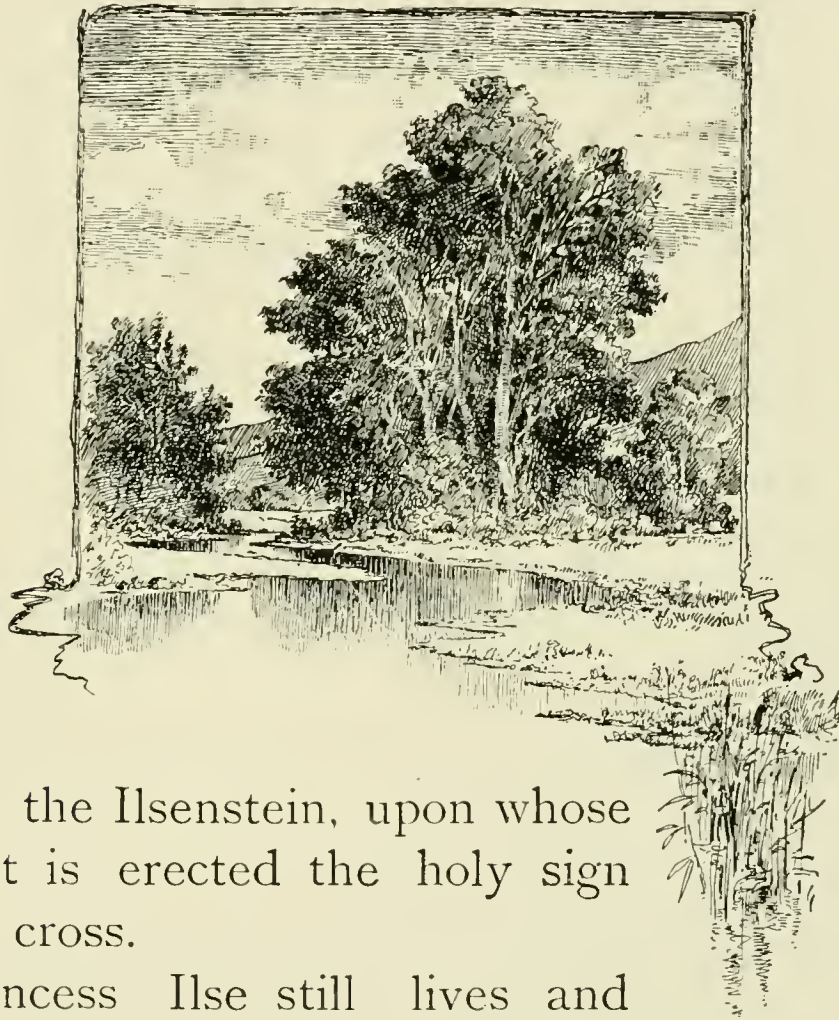
IN THE FORM OF BEAUTIFUL RED FOX-GLOVES.

In the form of beautiful, red fox-gloves they gathered in coquettish groups upon the free, sunny

mountain-slopes, thence beckoning to the ferns and calling to the modest blue-bells in order to force them asunder. But the blue-bells saw the deadly drops of poison embedded in the brilliant, scarlet flower-cups, and gently shaking their heads kept close to Ilse and begged the ferns to stand before them with wide spread fans that they need no longer see the insidious tempters. Princess Ilse looked up timidly and murmured earnest prayers whenever the witches passed by. She loved and caressed the true blue-bells and ferns, and when she saw that the wet stones along her path glanced with far too shining faces at the witch-flowers, she shrewdly threw over them her silvery veil and dazzled them with lustrous sunbeams, which she caught and roguishly threw in their faces.

Although Princess Ilse could not prevent the highway from winding through the valley, she tried to avoid it as much as lay in her power. She followed side-paths through the deepest shades of the woods, and made serpentine curves to get out of its way. When in mad haste she sprang over the cliffs and believed she had entirely escaped from the dusty companion, she ran directly against it and the road threw a bridge over her, so that she must conceal her ill-will and bend and glide under

the yoke in order to come the more quickly into freedom. Her anger, however, was of short duration. Further down in the valley she glided more quietly along by the road, and humbly kissed the



foot of the Ilsenstein, upon whose summit is erected the holy sign of the cross.

Princess Ilse still lives and goes each day to the mills and iron foundries to accomplish her modest work. When the mills are closed Sunday, the valley's industrious inhabitants, in holiday attire, ascend the

mountain to pray in the old church above, and to hear the word of God simply but powerfully expounded. Then, too, the silvery voice of little Ilse melodiously unites with the peal of bell and organ that, escaping from the old castle walls, hovers over the valley.

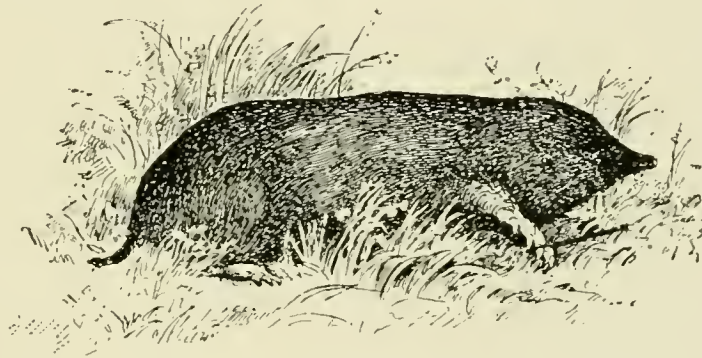
During the ages in which little Ilse has run through the valley, dispersing blessings to all around her, she has lost nothing of her original purity and loveliness. For has she not drank from the spring of eternal youth, and is not the effect of this draught seen in her purity and clearness, her eager reception of heavenly light, and the power with which she is able to throw herself unharmed upon rocks placed by the hand of God?

And this same source of strength is attainable by all who seek it aright. Thus Princess Ilse shows to the world what a foolish, wandering child is capable of becoming after the devil of pride has been cast out.

Each summer, toilers in the busy world who have become weary with the turmoil and anxieties of daily life, come to Ilse in the valley, and she does her utmost to restore to them happiness and freedom from care, so long as they tarry in the shade of her woods where the green is greener and

spicier, and the air fresher and more invigorating than anywhere else in the world.

When the summer guests of the valley make coffee by the mossy bank at the foot of the Ilsenstein, the little Princess mounts willingly into the small, swaying kettle, and performs her part of the labor. As reward she asks only that those who enjoy the rare privilege of drinking the delicious beverage which she is instrumental in preparing,



shall give a few crumbs of bread or cake to the little mole that dwells in the crannies of the mossy bank. He is a direct descendant of the mole that burrowed the tunnel in the Brocken, through which, in grey antiquity, Princess Ilse escaped to the valley.

Not every coffee-party indeed may have the honor of seeing the dainty little creature, thrusting out of its hole its pointed head and bright, keen eyes, for it is shy, like its entire race. But

whoever happens to espy it is, in duty bound, lest he incur the anger of Ilse, to feed it with such dainties as he has at his command.

This tale has nothing further to relate. After having deeply imbedded itself in the green rocky valley, it experienced no desire to follow little Ilse down to the level land where she joins the Ocker, the Ecker, later the Aller, and finally the old Weser, who leads all of these and many other waters, both great and small, to their distant ocean home.

But what the tale would like to know is how such a poor Ilse drop feels when she finds herself a part of the great world-sea.















